

INCheshire Travel Experiences



Merilee Kern

Merilee Kern, executive editor & producer of The Luxe List International News Syndicate, is a good life connoisseur who keeps her finger on the pulse of the luxury marketplace in search of new and innovative must-haves and exemplary experiences at all price points - the affordable to the extreme.

She keeps her finger on the pulse of what's trending across all leisure and lifestyle product, service and travel categories to inform, enlighten and entertain. Also an award-winning author, APP developer, owner of a thriving communications agency, a two-time fitness champion and a proud mother of two, Merilee is the very definition of a renaissance woman.

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When visiting Las Vegas there's no better VIP experience than buzzing the famed strip by helicopter en-route to a tour of the Grand Canyon - especially one paired with a champagne picnic in the colossal canyon itself. And, no company does this better than Sundance Helicopters that, for nearly 30 years, has been making passengers feel like real high flyers in Sin City, writes Merilee Kern.



High Flyers

VIP Grand Canyon helicopter picnic tour

Founded in 1985, Sundance Helicopters is the most experienced tour company in Las Vegas, also boasting the longest standing relationship with the Hualapai Nation Native American Indian Tribe.

This key partnership extends over 25 years, facilitating incredible access to the tribe's reservation within the Grand Canyon.

Lounge Lizards

Paramount among the company's luxe offerings is the VIP Deluxe Grand Canyon Champagne Picnic Tour. This elite experience begins with a complimentary limo pickup from any property on the strip. The limo drops guests off at the revamped Sundance Helicopters terminal - a 13,000 square foot facility complete with a VIP lounge where celebs and other A-listers and high rollers can enjoy added privacy and security as well as charging stations, a patio waiting area and a conference room.

Visitors are greeted at the terminal by a walkway shaded with a 25-foot canopy leading into a bustling reception and registration area.

A gift shop sells an assortment of apropos keepsakes, including stunning hand-made art and figurines from the Hualapai Nation.

Haute Helicopters

Sundance offers 16 different Grand Canyon tours with its fleet of 25 helicopters. However, the face of that fleet is changing, with five new EC-130T2 helicopters and plans to replace the entire fleet with these sleek new models by 2018.

The more technologically-advanced, environmentally-friendly EC-130 provides better performance and more comfort and luxury than its predecessor with features such as ample leg room and leather, energy absorbing, forward facing seats;

a Bose sound system; larger, wraparound windows; and air conditioning - a blessing during the blazing summer months.

Additionally, while the EC-130 helicopter overall is 23% larger than the older choppers, it is also the quietest aircraft in its class, adhering to, or exceeding, stringent noise standards.

Aesthetically, the EC-130 is a stunner with a sleek body that gleams with reflective chrome plating, embellished with genuine gold and silver detail. It's sky bling at its best!

Tour Tacular

When everyone is secured on board and headsets are in place on all passengers, the Sundance Helicopter tour is poised for take-off.

Once airborne, the first point of interest on the tour is the Hoover Dam, even more impressive from this sky-high vantage point, and then Lake Mead.

The headsets play strategically timed and themed music interspersed with an audio recording - available in nine languages - distilling facts and figures about the sights below.

The friendly and knowledgeable pilot adds interesting first-person perspective and commentary as well.

Passengers really hit pay dirt amid a breath-taking approach to the Grand Canyon, flying above and within the behemoth, beautifully striated stone formations. Like a magic carpet ride, the helicopter ever-so-smoothly descends 3,200 feet to fly passengers over the Colorado River and in between the walls of the Canyon as they're bathed in the golden light of the desert sun.

Bubbles & Boulders

There is no restaurant on the planet that can compare to a picnic on the floor of the Grand Canyon.

While the company offers various picnic options, I basked in the champagne breakfast tour that was simple yet stylish, made all the more delicious by the spectacular surroundings.

Various tour groups convene at a picnic site owned and leased to Sundance by the Hualapai Nation. Amid the splendour that surrounds, photo opportunities abound and the pilots are happy to oblige and take pictures of you and your companions in front of the helicopter, stone crests and any other available vista of choice.

The tour then continues with an after-breakfast flight through Nevada's oldest and largest state park and then finishes with a spin down The Strip itself.

A Fab Finish

With the VIP tour option, you can take a complimentary souvenir pre-recorded tour DVD and personal souvenir photograph (taken in front of the helicopter before take-off) home with you.

The three-and-a-half-hour tour culminates with complimentary limo service back to your hotel.

The current per-person tour cost is around \$538. Considering the high level of service, the exciting ride and the unparalleled scenery sure to leave an indelible mark on your memory as a remarkable life experience, this tour is truly priceless.

Some or all of the accommodations(s), experience(s), item(s) and/or service(s) detailed above were provided at no cost to accommodate this review, but all opinions expressed are entirely those of Merilee Kern and have not been influenced in any way.

